

Gardeners urged to use plants native to Pennsylvania

By: **GEMA MARIA DUARTE** (Wed, May/30/2007)

Lynne Sharkey will be particular about what she'll be planting this gardening season.

The Bensalem resident said she'll be taking the advice of an expert and using native plants instead of exotic in an effort to be more environmentally conscious.

"A native plant is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, state, ecosystem and habitat without direct or indirect human contact," said Steven Saffier, Audubon Pennsylvania's Audubon At Home Coordinator.

Saffier, who travels around the state, lectured about 20 people Tuesday night at the Lower Southampton Township Library on how to use native plants in their backyards in ways that will benefit birds and other wild life.

His lecture was hosted by the Lower Southampton Environmental Advisory Council.

In his lecture, entitled "Home Landscapes and the Nature Mosaic," Saffier told of the benefits of using native plants, including cardinal flowers, wild columbine and bleeding hearts.

He said native plants require less maintenance and water and no pesticides. The hardy plants are drought resistant and benefit the environment because they reduce air pollution, and provide shelter and food for wildlife.

In the one-hour presentation, he cautioned against using invasive plants like Japanese still grass and multi flora rose.

Saffier also encouraged replacing turf grass with native grasses, reducing lawn size, watering only when needed and eliminating pesticides.

"The more food you have in your garden, the healthier the birds will be," he said.

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Article's URL:

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